

New Wyoming Army Guard recruits prep for the basics

By Officer Candidate Christian Venhuizen
Public Affairs Specialist
Wyoming National Guard

CAMP GUERNSEY, Wyo. – The Soldiers of Wyoming's Recruit Sustainment Program don't exactly march in step, many of them never show up to formation in uniform and some even still have a full head of hair.

Their commander doesn't mind. He expects it. He also expects a major change in a few short months, that's when these Soldiers head off to basic training.

"The RSP is here to help these recruits prepare for what they'll face in basic training," Maj. Fred Fichtner said. Fichtner is the officer in charge of Wyoming's RSP. "It helps them prepare physically and mentally, and it gives them an edge in marksmanship and warrior skills."

Since the inception of the RSP two years ago, Wyoming has produced 19 honor graduates from basic and advanced training companies and classes, 13 in the last year. Typically there are less than a handful of honor graduates out of a basic training class of 120 Soldiers headed for active duty, the National Guard or the Army Reserves from across the country.

"We're finding our Soldiers are way ahead," Master Sgt. Harold Pafford said. "We're seeing success."

There are three RSP units based at Camp Guernsey, Rock Springs and Worland. Soldiers remain in the RSP until they complete their advanced training and a physical fitness test in Wyoming.

Unlike the active duty component and Army Reserves, Army National Guard Soldiers are expected to attend monthly drills with a unit once they take the Oath of Enlistment. They are not deployable outside of the United States, but they are under the command of their two commanders in chief, the president of the United States and the governor of Wyoming.

Most of this group of RSP Soldiers will head to their basic training and advanced training sites around the country by July. Many will start leaving in May.

"I think some of them are a little worried," Pafford said. "It's getting down to crunch time to go to basic and (advanced training)."

The monthly drills in April and May are specifically designed to prepare them for some of the key tasks they'll face. April's drill allowed the Soldiers to gain experience firing M-16 rifles, a Soldier's main tool on the battlefield. May's drill will test them on basic Soldier knowledge and skills. If they pass that test, they'll advance in rank.

"A higher rank could mean leadership positions for our Soldiers at basic training," Fichtner said. "It would also mean a bigger pay check."

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Photos available upon request or at the Wyoming National Guard Website
<http://www.wy.ngb.army.mil/PAO/release/release.asp>

SUGGESTED OUTLINE: PUSHING AS A TEAM – Privates Katie Heady and Mary Owens, both of Laramie, slap hands in between pushups, during the Wyoming Recruit Sustainment Program's April drill, April 21, at Camp Guernsey. The Recruit Sustainment Program prepares new Soldiers for the rigors of basic and advanced training.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE: FIRED UP FOR PT – Pvt. Anthony Brown expresses his motivation for morning physical training, during the Wyoming Recruit Sustainment Program's April drill, April 21, at Camp Guernsey. The Recruit Sustainment Program prepares new Soldiers for the rigors of basic and advanced training.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE: COACHING SUCCESS – Pvt. Chris Berry, of Glendo, left, is coached by Pfc. Daniel Hillshafer, during the Wyoming Recruit Sustainment Program's April drill, April 21, at Camp Guernsey. The Recruit Sustainment Program prepares new Soldiers for the rigors of basic and advanced training.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE: SHOT GROUPING – Pvt. Jonathan Griffin, of Hulett, checks his shots during the Wyoming Recruit Sustainment Program's April drill, April 21, at Camp Guernsey. The Recruit Sustainment Program prepares new Soldiers for the rigors of basic and advanced training.